

Testimony before the Housing Committee
February 3, 2015
HB 5583 An Act Protecting Housing for Senior Citizens
Catherine Kriss

Good morning Senator Winfield and Representative Butler and Members of the Housing Committee:

This testimony is specifically in regard to Proposed **HB 5583: An Act Housing for Elderly Persons**, which proposes to amend Title 8 of the general statutes to require that 86% of state-assisted public housing for elderly persons be occupied only by such elderly persons; and any other Proposed House or Senate Bill it applies to.

My name is Catherine F. Kriss and I am currently 50 years old, diagnosed with a mental disability in September 2005. I fall under the classification of "non-elderly" for public housing due to my mental health condition. After living seven years in private housing in Enfield, a tenant for an absentee landlord who lives in California, I applied for public housing in Enfield in June 2014 and was rejected in July 2014 because my income of \$721 per month did not meet single occupancy public housing requirements. I am not the only one. There are many other mentally disabled persons like myself who do not qualify for this type of housing.

I serve as the secretary to a focus group of elderly housing for the Commission on Aging (with a link to transportation and socialization) in Enfield. I learned that according to Scott Bertrand, the Executive Director of the Enfield Housing Authority, there has been a major shift over the years of elderly vs. non-elderly/disabled. Our focus group studied the mixed populations in non-elderly housing, also. In 2014, elderly needs represented 48 percent, while the non-elderly/disabled needs represented 52 percent. Statistics show non-elderly housing for Enfield alone quickly increasing since 2002: 2002 = 14%; 2007 = 26%; 2012 = 47%; 2014 = 52%. This is because the average age of the elderly is 74 and they are expected to be in that housing for approximately ten years before their needs change, while the non-elderly average age is 48 and they are expected to be in that housing 32 years before their needs change. It is my understanding that the housing needs for seniors in Enfield will be gradual--possibly six years from now (2021), Enfield will be looking at a housing shortage. What is to happen to the non-elderly/disabled needing public housing currently?

Excluding a constitutionally protected group from access to safe, decent, and affordable housing is NOT the way to increase access to safe, decent affordable housing for older people.

Thank you for letting me express my opinion this day.

Respectfully yours,

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